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SUBJ: MARCH 18 MEETING OF GENEVA GROUP OF ROME

SUMMARY

THE MARCH 21-23 VISIT OF FAO DIRECTOR-GENERAL SAOUMA TO WASHINGTON GIVES SOME IMMEDIACY OF INTEREST IN THE VIEWS OF OTHER GENEVA GROUP GOVERNMENTS ON HIS PROGRAM OF WORK AND BUDGET FOR 1978-1979. ON THE LEVEL OF THE BUDGET, THE NETHERLANDS AND NEW ZEALAND EXPRESSED, IN THE GENEVA GROUP IN ROME, MODERATE OPPOSITION TO THE LEVEL OF THE INCREASE, THE UK AND FRANCE SEEMED PREPARED TO ACCEPT, AND OTHERS WERE UNINSTRUCTED. OPPOSITION TO THE USE OF SUSPENSE ACCOUNT TO CREATE A NEW FUND FOR POST-HARVEST LOSSES WAS EXPRESSED BY FRANCE, GERMANY, JAPAN, THE NETHERLANDS AND NEW ZEALAND. END OF SUMMARY

1. THE GENEVA GROUP OF ROME MET MARCH 18 IN BRITISH EMBASSY TO DISCUSS REACTIONS TO THE FAO DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S PRESENTATION TO THEM OF HIS PROGRAM OF WORK AND BUDGET FOR 1978-1979. MICHAEL USNICK OF OMB ATTENDED AS AN OBSERVER.

2. PRELIMINARY REACTION TO THE EXPOSITION AS A WHOLE WAS
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FAVORABLE, ALTHOUGH MANY REPRESENTATIVES HAD ONLY LIMITED INSTRUCTIONS FROM CAPITALS. THE U.S. AND CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVES NOTED THAT DIRECTOR-GENERAL SAOUMA WAS VISITING THEIR COUNTRIES, AND THEY HAD NO INSTRUCTIONS PENDING THESE VISITS. ON THE LEVEL OF THE BUDGET, THE FRENCH REPRESENTATIVE SAID THE FRENCH FORMULA WOULD HAVE PROVIDED FOR ONLY DOLS 202 MILLION AS OPPOSED TO THE DOLS 206.8 CALLED FOR, BUT THEY

BELIEVED DIRECTOR-GENERAL SAOUMA HAD MADE A STRONG EFFORT, AND WERE PREPARED TO ACCEPT HIS PROPOSAL. THE UNITED KINGDOM REPORTED A NOT UNFAVORABLE INITIAL REACTION, PRESUMABLY APPLYING TO THE BUDGET LEVEL. THE NETHERLANDS HAD JUST RECEIVED GUIDANCE THAT 6.8 PERCENT REAL INCREASE WAS TOO MUCH, ALTHOUGH IT RECOGNIZED THE NEED FOR SOME GROWTH. NEW ZEALAND SAID THAT IT WOULD HAVE PREFERRED ZERO REAL INCREASE, BUT WOULD BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT SOMETHING SLIGHTLY LESS THAN THE 6.8 PERCENT PROPOSED.

3. ALMOST ALL OF THE REPRESENTATIVES WITH INSTRUCTIONS FROM THEIR GOVERNMENTS OPPOSED THE USE OF THE SUSPENSE ACCOUNT TO ESTABLISH A FUND FOR DEALING WITH POST-HARVEST LOSSES: FRANCE, GERMANY, JAPAN, THE NETHERLANDS, AND NEW ZEALAND. THE OBJECTIONS CITED WERE ON THE BASIS OF THE IMPROPRIETY OF USING THE SUSPENSE ACCOUNT FOR SUCH A NEW FUND, AND QUESTIONS ABOUT SETTING UP ANY MORE NEW FUNDS. (USNICK AND U.S. REPRESENTATIVE NORRED LATER DISCUSSED THIS ISSUE BRIEFLY WITH THE FAO DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL AND FAO FINANCIAL OFFICERS. FAO DIRECTOR-GENERAL SAOUMA HAD REFERRED TO THE PROPOSAL, IN HIS USUAL FORTHRIGHT MANNER, IN HIS DISCUSSION WITH THE GENEVA GROUP ON MARCH 8, BUT WE UNDERSTAND THE FORMAL DOCUMENTARY PROPOSAL WILL GO IN SUBSTANCE TO THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND THE FINANCIAL ASPECTS ONLY TO THE FINANCE COMMITTEE ON A PERSONAL BASIS, NOT TO BE CONVEYED TO GOVERNMENTS, EVEN TO THOSE WITH MEMBERS ON THE COMMITTEE. THE FAO OFFICIALS REFERRED TO THE PROPOSAL AS A QTE PAINLESS UNQTE WAY OF ESTABLISHING THE FUND.

4. ON THE TECHNICAL COOPERATION PROGRAM AND THE CREATION OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SEPARATE FAO COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE ESTABLISHMENTS, THE NETHERLANDS EXPRESSED OPPOSITION TO BOTH, AND FRANCE EXPRESSED OPPOSITION TO THE LATTER. GERMANY SAID SIMPLY THAT IT HAD FEARED A GREATER INCREASE IN THE TECHNICAL COOPERATION PROGRAM.

5. THE GROUP APPROVED AN OUTLINE OF A SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT BY THE CO-CHAIRMEN FOR THE GENEVA GROUP CONSULTATION LEVEL MEETING, AND THIS WILL BE SENT BY TELEGRAM WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

6. AS FOR INTERNAL GENEVA GROUP ASSIGNMENTS THE FINANCE SUBGROUP WILL UNDERTAKE TO STUDY THE FAO CALCULATIONS OF COST INCREASES AND THE EFFECTS OF UNDP PROPOSALS FOR CHANGES IN FAO HANDLING OF OVERHEAD CHARGES. IT WILL MEET ON FRIDAY, MARCH 25. THE FUNCTIONS OF THE FIELD PROGRAM SUB-GROUP HAVE BEEN ENLARGED TO INCLUDE ALL PROGRAM ACTIVITIES UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF NETHERLANDS REPRESENTATIVE DE BAKKER.BEAUDRY

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